



## **The Ban on Baiting and Feeding in Wisconsin**

On July 3, 2002, it became illegal to feed or bait deer in Wisconsin. Prohibiting feeding and baiting is a part of the state's efforts to control Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) and reduce the chance that CWD will become established in new areas of Wisconsin.

While wildlife officials acknowledge that CWD could spread with or without baiting and feeding, they maintain it would spread faster by allowing these activities, as these practices could bring healthy deer together with diseased deer. And, they add, even small amounts of bait and feed appear to present a disease transmission risk.

The prohibition on baiting applies statewide to deer archery and gun hunters. The ban on feeding applies statewide as well, and prohibits any recreational or supplemental feeding of deer. Officials decided to ban feeding and baiting statewide, instead of just in the infected area because the risk factors that could contribute to the introduction of CWD into the deer herd may be present statewide.

Wisconsin is not the only state to ban baiting and feeding. Colorado, Illinois, Michigan, and Minnesota also prohibit baiting and feeding to reduce the spread of wildlife diseases.

The Wisconsin Conservation Congress Executive Council, Whitetails Unlimited, Wisconsin Bowhunters Association, Wisconsin Deer Hunters Coalition, Wisconsin Deer Hunters Association, and the Quality Deer Management Association supported the baiting and feeding ban.

### **Baiting Deer**

**Deer baiting**, legal in Wisconsin until now, is the practice of putting out food that will attract deer for the purpose of shooting the deer during legal hunting seasons.

Under the rule, baiting is prohibited. Any bait used to attract deer for hunting is prohibited. This includes mineral blocks and supplements, but does not effect the use of liquid scents, such as doe urine. Liquid scents are defined as any nonsolid material except honey that takes the shape of the container at 70 degrees. Any amount of liquid scent is allowed while hunting as long as it is not used to feed wild animals, such as molasses.

### **Feeding Deer**

**Deer feeding** is defined as placing quantities of food out to attract deer for purposes other than hunting, such as wildlife viewing. Under the authority of this emergency rule, feeding deer is prohibited. However, there are exceptions to allow the feeding of small mammals (squirrels and rabbits) and birds.

### **Allowable Practices**

Food plots, normal agricultural practices and gardens are not regulated by this rule. "The disease risks associated with feeding sites are different from food plots in that feeding sites have food repeatedly placed in the same spot," said Bill Vander Zouwen, chief of Department of Natural Resources wildlife and landscape ecology section.

Placement of plain water is not considered feed or bait and is not regulated.

## **Baiting bear and feeding animals other than deer**

Bear hunters and dog trainers can continue to use bait, but the bait must be placed in a hole in the ground, a stump, or a hollow log and covered by rocks or logs so that deer cannot access the bait. Bait placed for this purpose can only be used between April 15 and the end of the bear harvest season. In addition, to hunt over or train dogs off a bait site, the individual must possess a Class A or Class B bear permit.

People can continue to feed birds and small mammals as long as they place the food within 50 yards of homes or work places in feeding devices or structures that make the feed unavailable to deer either by design, physical barrier such as a fence, or height above the ground.

People can also continue to hand-feed animals other than deer if they place the food no more than 30 feet away and make a reasonable attempt to remove unused food when they leave the feeding site.

## **Baiting and its effects on hunting**

DNR research has found that about 40 percent of bowhunters and 17 percent of gun hunters use bait, respectively.

- The percentage of bow hunters using bait increased throughout the 1990s while the percentage of gun hunters using bait has stabilized during the past 6 years.
- The effect of bait on harvest success differs between bow and gun hunters and is influenced by the duration of baiting.
- Bow hunters who use bait have higher success rates than those who do not use bait.
- Bait usage has little effect on overall success of gun hunters; however, gun hunters who use bait throughout the early bow and gun seasons had higher success rates.
- While the elimination of baiting may lower bow hunter success, it would have little effect on overall antlerless harvest and the ability to control deer populations.
- A conservative estimate of 487,391 bushels (3,983,450 gallons) of bait was used by deer hunters in northern Wisconsin during the 2001 deer season.
- A ban may restore natural seasonal movements of deer in Wisconsin.

## **Enforcement**

Violation of these rules could result in civil forfeitures of up to \$300 plus loss of hunting, fishing and trapping privileges for up to three years for deer feeding and up to \$2,091 plus loss of privileges for deer baiting.

Landowners who find that hunters or others illegally placed bait or feed on their property will be responsible for removing it.

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